

Moving Forward

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Losing someone close to you can be hard. Moving on with your life can be harder still. NejiTen. R&R

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A/N: Okay, I'm going to do this right here, right now. If you are not up to date with the MANGA, not the anime, the MANGA which is WAY AHEAD of the anime, here is your SPOILER ALERT right now. Second order of business, this is not a happy, cheery fanfic. There is a lot of angst, sorrow, and a bitter-sweet ending. So I'm just warning you all now. Also, I am going ahead of the manga where the war is now over. So, without further to do, here is my first ever NejiTen fanfic for Neji's birthday. Here goes!

A young kunoichi sat on her bed with her knees pulled up to her chest. Her chocolate eyes stared at an old picture sitting on her nightstand next to her bed. She had the picture turned so that she could look at it right before she went to bed and when she woke up.

She found her lip was quivering as she swallowed back a wave of tears. The war was over Madara and the Juubi had been defeated by Naruto and the Shinobi Alliance. The Shinobi world was now enjoying an era of peace. So why did it not feel like a victory? Why did she feel like the one who had lost everything?

Tenten sighed and reached up to where her two buns sat on the top of her head. Her bare, yet at the same time bloodstained, hands tugged at one hair tie then another until her thick, dark brown hair ran freely down her back.

She wore a loose, white tank top and red baggy pants yet she felt naked and exposed as if something, or someone, was missing. Someone who made her feel whole. Without that someone, she felt incomplete, broken.

Her right hand shook slightly as she leaned over and picked up the picture. Settling back into her pillow, Tenten ran her fingers along the four people: a teacher and his three students. Her fingers lingered on a boy standing next to a smiling brunette. He had long black hair, pale skin, and light purple eyes. He, unlike the girl, wore a stubborn frown, his scrawny arms crossed against his chest.

Tenten smiled at the memory as tears rolled silently down her flushed cheeks and hit the glass protecting the portrait. She did not bother with brushing them away; instead she hugged the picture to her chest, bowed her head, and let the tears come.

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'Where... where am I?' She wondered aloud as she found herself standing in a large clearing surrounded by trees. Something was teasing at her memory, she had been here before.

'You're in Konoha, of course,' said a familiar voice that jolted her heart as tears stung the backs of her eyes. 'Where else would you be? This is the training area that we used at least a thousand times, after all.'

Tenten turned around slowly, not daring to believe who she was hearing and now seeing.

A young man stood a few feet away from her. He was the same age as her with flowing black hair. He wore all black and no forehead protector but what really caught her attention were his light purple eyes which never left her chocolate ones.

'You look like you've seen a ghost,' he noted, a small smile playing at his lips.

*'Neji?' She breathed as she took a step back, shaking her head. 'But, no, this can't be! You're **dead** ! We saw you die! I saw you die!'*

Neji merely stood there, watching her for a moment then started to walk over to her.

Tenten put her hands up in front of her, taking another step back, though what she really wanted to do was run into his arms and never let him go. 'This isn't real. I'm... I'm dreaming. I must be dreaming!'

' So what if it is?' He asked her, shrugging his shoulders as he stopped only a few feet away from her. He was so close that she could have reached out a hand and stroked his arm or his cheek, the thought made her hands burn with longing. 'So what if this is a dream? Just because it's happening inside your head doesn't mean it's not real.'

' Alright, so say this is real,' She mused as he took a step closer to her. 'Why is this happening?'

*' You tell me,' He said, taking a lock of her hair and twirling it around his finger. They were so close now that she could feel his breath on her skin. If this was a dream then why did he feel so **real** ? 'You're the one who called me here.'*

' I did?' Tenten said surprised as she dragged her gaze from his lips to his eyes that had never left hers.

Neji nodded as his hand moved from her lock of hair to her cheek, stroking her cheekbone. 'I heard your voice calling my name so I followed it and found myself here. Though, I have to ask, why here?'

' It was the one place where we were alone,' she murmured as blush crept into her cheeks. 'I always looked forward to coming here to train, knowing that it would just be the two of us.'

' We did train here a lot, didn't we,' He mused, tracing her face with his fingertips. 'I didn't know it had meant so much to you.'

' Of course it meant a lot to me,' she said, her hands still up in front of her were now touching his shirt. She could feel his muscles under

the fabric, hard and defined as a shinobi's was supposed to be. 'Anytime I was with you meant a lot to me.'

Neji moved his hand down her cheek and cupped her chin. Tenten felt the familiar sensation of a magnetic pull bringing her closer and closer to Neji until there was no more space between them. She tilted her head to the side as his lips met hers.

If this was a dream then it was a damn good one. Neji felt so real, so alive. His lips felt warm and electric against hers. His hands were wrapped around her waist as she put one hand on the back of his head, gripping his hair, and another hand on the back of his neck.

After a few moments, they broke apart to catch their breath. That was when she noticed his forehead, it was bare.

'What? What's wrong?' he asked her.

*'The seal on your forehead,' she whispered. 'It's gone. Just like when you were lying down on the battlefield. So this really is a dream. I'm so stupid! I knew at the beginning that this was a dream but then I started wondering, **hoping** this was real. I **needed** it to be real. I've missed you so much Neji, so much that it hurts. That's why I was foolish enough to hope that all of this was real. That we were in our training area, that you were alive. That I had dreamt you dying but you **are** dead and this **is** a dream.'*

Tears rolled down her cheeks as her shoulders shook. Neji hugged her tightly, but she no longer felt his warmth. He laid his cheek against hers and whispered something in her ear. He then let her go and stepped back with a sad smile as he disappeared in a cloud of smoke.

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Tenten jolted awake with a small cry, covered in sweat. It was barely sunrise outside but she could not fall back asleep. The dream replayed over and over again in her mind. She could not get over

how real it had felt. Maybe it had not been a dream; maybe, just maybe it had been real.

'I miss you too, Tenten,' he had whispered. 'But just because I'm dead doesn't mean I'm truly gone. I will always be with you, watching over you. So, please, don't be sad any longer. I know it hurts but you have to go on. You can't let your grief consume your life. You have the potential to be one of the greatest kunoichis ever, like Tsunade-sama. Don't give up. I love you, Tenten.'

Tenten found herself grinning as she placed her portrait back on the nightstand, her eyes lingering on Neji. "I love you too, Neji. I won't let you down, I promise. I will become one of the greatest kunoichis ever."

She turned, stretched, and stared out her window at the rising sun. It was a new day, full of new adventures and she did not plan on missing out on any of it. She took a shower, got dressed, ate, and ran out her front door to see what the day would bring knowing that there was a bird, free from its cage, watching over her.

A/N: And there you have it. NejiTen was, and still is my all-time favorite couple. I cried when Neji died in the manga but Kishi knows what he is doing, he always has, and, as always, I trust him 100% to give Naruto the best ending ever. Til next time: read, review, and show the love!